OPENING STATEMENT OF
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AIRCRAFT ICING
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I want to thank Chairman Costello and Ranking Member Petri for holding this hearing on aircraft icing. Twenty years ago, I held hearings on how weather impacts aviation safety. Weather is one factor in aviation that we cannot control, so we must do all that is possible to understand it and manage its hidden dangers. Today, we must again focus on the important weather-related issue of icing and its implications for a safe national airspace system.

After the Colgan 3407 accident near Buffalo last year, it was widely speculated that the aircraft crashed due to icing. While icing was ultimately determined **not** to have caused the accident, it highlighted the issue of icing. Icing has been on the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) Most Wanted List of transportation safety improvements since 1997 and earlier this month, it was continued on the 2009-2010 List.

The 1994 crash of a regional airliner in Roselawn, Indiana was a safety wake-up call for improved aircraft certification to combat icing. According to the NTSB, the Roselawn crash, in which 68 people were killed, was caused by a loss of control of the

aircraft due to in-flight icing. The NTSB also concluded that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) aircraft icing certification process does not adequately test an aircraft's flight handling and stall characteristics under a realistic range of adverse icing conditions, such as those experienced by the aircraft in the Roselawn accident.

According to the FAA and the NTSB, supercooled large droplets (known as SLD) were present in the atmosphere at the time of the Roselawn accident and caused ice accretion of such a character that the aircraft flew beyond the parameters it was certified to fly in. Other icing conditions that, if encountered, may take an aircraft outside the FAA's current certification parameters, include freezing drizzle and rain and mixed water/ice crystal conditions.

As a result of the Roselawn accident, the FAA started a multi-year in-flight aircraft icing plan to address aircraft icing issues. According to the FAA, since the accident, it has issued over 100 Airworthiness Directives (ADs) on 50 different aircraft models. These ADs include changes to procedures pilots must follow in icing conditions, and direct changes in aircraft design. The FAA claims that due to its efforts there has not been a fatal icing accident on a U.S. commercial air carrier in the last 13 years.

Since 1994, the FAA has completed three rulemakings on icing. One rule revised the certification standards for the handling and controllability characteristics of newly-designed part 25 aircraft (such as major airline aircraft and most business jets) in icing conditions; however, the rule did not include revisions to deal with SLD conditions. The second rule pertained to the activation of ice protection systems on newly-designed part 25 aircraft certified for flight in icing conditions. The third rule bans the practice of allowing operators to operate aircraft with "polished frost" (i.e., frost polished to make it smooth) on the wings and other control surfaces.

Though these FAA rulemaking actions show progress on icing issues, the NTSB continues to assert that the "pace of FAA's activities remains unacceptably slow." In addition, NTSB states the FAA must use the research it already has on freezing rain and SLD to revise the way aircraft are designed and approved for flight in icing conditions. Further, once FAA has revised its icing requirements, NTSB wants FAA to apply its new requirements to currently certificated aircraft. In addition, the NTSB states that the FAA should require that aircraft with ice protection equipment deploy that equipment as soon as the aircraft enters icing conditions. I look forward to hearing from the FAA on its response to the NTSB's recommendations.

Meanwhile, I am concerned that pilot training for icing may not be specifically related to the conditions the pilot is likely to encounter and the aircraft that he or she is flying. Aviation would benefit from providing pilots with additional tools, such as better-defined operating procedures for icing and winter weather conditions. Captain Rory Kay from the Air Line Pilots Association is here this afternoon, and I look forward to hearing him testify on this issue.

As the NTSB has indicated, there is a critical need for additional guidance from the FAA on how to deal with in-flight icing. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how to neutralize the dangers posed by in-flight icing and what we can do to speed up the icing rulemaking process.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.